Beyond an Imperial Atlantic: Trajectories of Africans From Upper Guinea and West-Central Africa in the Early Atlantic World

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Since Fernand Braudel offered a new vision of the global interconnections of maritime history through the Mediterranean, historians of Africa and of what is now called "Atlantic" history have tended to pursue ever divergent paths.[1] As Bernard Bailyn has noted, the influence of a common Christian culture and the importance of strategic trans-Atlantic alliances in the cold war era made the study of Atlantic history turn towards an understanding of the historical depths of inter-imperial Atlantic linkages;[2] however, in the post-colonial context of Africanist historiography, early interest in pre-colonial African states was rapidly transformed into what Richard Reid has called the presentism of contemporary historical studies of Africa.[3] This means that engagement by historians of Africa with the conceptualisation of the Atlantic has been slow: this article shows, however, that new

[1] Fernand Braudel, *La Méditérranée et le Monde Méditérranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II*, 2 vols. (1949: repr. ed., Paris, 1966).

[2] Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours*. (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

[3] Richard Reid, 'Past and Presentism: the 'pre–colonial' and the foreshortening of African history', *Journal of African History*, lii, no. ii, (2011), 135–55. For studies of the relationship of the pre–colonial African state to Atlantic trade from this era, see among others K.Y. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720: A Study of African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford, 1970); J.D. Fage, *A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey* (1955: repr. ed., Cambridge, 1966); Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth–Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore, 1982); Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford, 1977); Law, *The Horse in West African History: The Role of the Horse in the Societies of Pre–Colonial West Africa* (Oxford, 1980); Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545–1800* (Oxford, 1970); A.F.C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485–1897* (London, 1969); Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah* (Madison, 1966).

approaches to the concept of "diaspora" enable us to see past the tragedy of violent enslavement and the place of European empires, and to consider key ways in which African peoples forged the linkages which helped to make the Atlantic world.

First it is important to recognise the methodological reasons why historians of Africa largely turned away from the pre-colonial era. Key to these, as John Parker and Richard Rathbone note, were questions of sources and shifting priorities.[4] Firstly, African colonial records became available from the 1970s onwards, shifting the balance of the historiography to the twentieth century.[5] Allied to this, the rise of structural indebtedness moved the urgency of inquiry towards more recent issues, away from the question of Atlantic trade and the long-term place of the state and kingdoms in African history which was a centrepiece of discussion in the 1960s.[6] Thus, debates at the heart of the current conjuncture of Atlantic and global histories find less resonance in more recent literature on Africa.[7]

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[4] John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2007), 91–2.

[5] For works which use these sources, as well as others such as oral sources and colonial archives held in Africa, see for instance, Nwando Achebe, *The Female King of Colonial Nigeria: Ahebi Ugbabe* (Bloomington, 2011); David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York, 2005); Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau–Mau, Creating Kenya: Civil War, Counterinsurgency and Decolonisation* (Cambridge, 2009); Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, 2011); Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West Africa Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC, 2006); David Pratten, *The Man–Leopard Murders: History and Society in Colonia Nigeria* (Edinburgh, 2007).

[6] John Fage, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History', *Journal of African History*, x, no. iii (1969), 393–404; Walter Rodney, 'African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade', *Journal of African History*, vii, no. iii (1966), 431–43.

[7] Although there are signs of a change in this: see for instance 'JAH Forum: Africa and Global History', *Journal of African History*, liv, no. iii, (2013), 317-49.

The question of the Atlantic is therefore problematized by some historians of Africa. The idea of an "African Atlantic" can imply some problems for an Africanist historian, particularly owing to the sources available. It is possible to combine oral and written sources for the recovery of African histories from several centuries back in time, as a variety of scholars have shown;[8] nevertheless, this is a notoriously time-consuming procedure, and so works using this approach are in a very small minority. Thus an additional factor in the tendency of historians of Africa to problematize the idea of Atlantic history is an awareness of the difficulties attendant to using sources produced by Africans from before the 20th century.[9]

Nevertheless, this article intervenes in the methodological questions of both African and Atlantic histories, arguing that a study of African trajectories in a pan-Atlantic context is important for historians of both Africa and the Atlantic world, and could indeed help to

[8] See Robert M. Baum, *Shrines of the Slave Trade: Diola Religion and Society in Precolonial Senegambia* (Oxford, 1999); Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300–1589* (Cambridge, 2012); Sandra E. Greene, *Gender, Ethnicity and Social Change on the Upper Slave Coast: A History of the Anlo–Ewe* (Portsmouth, NH, 1996); Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations Along the Guinea–Bissau Coast, 1400–1900* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003); Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire*; David Lishilinimle Imbua, *Intercourse and Crosscurrents in the Atlantic World: Calabar–British Experience, 17th–20th Centuries* (Durham, NC, 2012); Joseph C. Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen: Early Mbundu States in Angola* (Oxford, 1976); Emily Lynn Osborn, *Our New Husbands are Here: Households, Gender, and Politics in a West African State From the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule* (Athens, Ga., 2011); Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Rochester, NY, 2011).

[9] For important contributions from the literature on this question, see Wyatt MacGaffey, 'African History, Anthropology and the Rationality of the Natives', *History in Africa*, v, (1978), 101–20; Barbara Cooper,. 'Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History', in John Phillips (ed.), *Writing African History* (Rochester, 2005): 191–215; Phyllis Martin, 'Sources and Source–Criticism', *Journal of African History*, xxix, no. iii, (1988): 537–40.

connect the two. Some important recent works have recovered new African sources for the relationship between the African state and African Atlantic histories.[10] Key studies provide an important focus in exploring the role of Africans in both Africa and the Atlantic diaspora.[11] And yet, when the field of global history is now increasingly concerned not so much with the formation of societies but with the linkages and networks which connected them, it is problematic that illuminating the African role in creating these linkages remains understudied in Atlantic historiography.[12]

To be sure, works which illustrate such linkages, and illuminate Africa's role in their formation, are becoming more numerous.[13] However, even in these works the focus is most often on linkages created to or from Africa rather than by Africans.[14] The brutal realities of

[10] See Osborn, *Our New Husbands are Here*. On African sources for the institution of slavery see especially Alice Bellagamba, Sandra E. Greene and Martin A. Klein, eds., *African Voices on Slavery and the Slave Trade: Volume 1, The Sources* (Cambridge, 2013); and Sandra E. Greene, *West African Narratives of Slavery Texts From Late 19th and Early 20th Century Ghana* (Bloomington, 2011).

[11] Foremost among these of course is John K. Thornton's *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450–1800* (1996: repr. ed. Cambridge, 1998). This set the tone for the greater interactions traced in John K. Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250–1820* (Cambridge, 2012).

[12] On the importance of understanding global history through linkages, see Joseph E. Inikori, 'Africa and the Globalization Process: Western Africa, 1450–1850', *Journal of Global History*, ii, no. i (2007), 65. A major exception to this rule is the new book by Manuel Barcia, *West African Warfare in Bahia and Cuba* (Oxford, 2014).

[13] See for instance, Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch–Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595*–1674 (Leiden, 2012); Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580–1674* (Leiden, 2011); James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, 2011).

[14] See for instance John H Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492–1830* (New Haven, 2007). Most of the chapters in Jack P. Greene and Phillip D. Morgan (eds.), *Atlantic History: A Critical Reappraisal* (Oxford, 2009) make only cursory reference to African perspectives. A notable exception

the forced migrations of the trans-Atlantic slave trade thus appear to have discouraged historians from looking at the place Africans may have had in building and enacting pan-Atlantic linkages.

This is a methodological problem for the understanding of both African and Atlantic histories. For Africanists, the desire to combat neo-Hegelian discourses that can yet see the continent as "outside history" requires more sustained discussion of African-centred trajectories in the Atlantic.[15] For Atlanticists it is difficult to square the field's analysis of global linkages with the reality that the activities of Africa and its peoples are not fully integrated within the discussion. For while much excellent work has shown the role of Africans in the diaspora in shaping New World societies, it remains the case that the place of peoples from Africa itself is under-represented in these discussions.[16] Meanwhile, from the Africanist perspective, new work has emerged in recent years on the interrelationship of African and Atlantic societies; but as this work is still quite new, there remains a need to

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is the excellent and balanced coverage in Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and their Shared History 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2009).

[15] A key example of such discourse were the views espoused by then French President Nicolas Sarkozy in an infamous speech in Dakar in 2007.

[16] Excellent recent examples of such work include Herman Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro–Mexico* (Bloomington, 2011); Rachel O'Toole, 'From the Rivers of Guinea to the Valleys of Peru: Becoming a Bran Diaspora Within Spanish Slavery', *Social Text*, xxv, no. iii (2007): 19–36; João José Reis, *Domingos Sodré, um Sacerdote Africano: Escravidão, Liberdade e Candomblé na Bahia do Século XIX* (São Paulo, 2008). The late 1990s did see some work seeking to bring West Africa into an Atlantic setting by Africanist historians, but the invitation took some time for Atlantic scholars to take up; see Robin Law and Kristin Mann, 'West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast", *William and Mary Quarterly*, lvi, no. ii (1999): 307-34.

show not only the African context of Atlantic histories, but also the fundamental analytical and historical interconnections linking the two.[17]

Fortunately theoretical changes in the past 20 years or so can assist with reconnecting African and Atlantic histories, particularly in the field of diaspora studies. Where the Black Atlantic diaspora was traditionally theorized through slavery, more recent approaches have broken down traditional paradigms of diasporas, and seen how the African diaspora in the Atlantic offers a more complex reality.[18] Historians such as Mariana Candido, and others, have argued that the concept of "creolisation" can be recast in a way which allows for the autonomy of African peoples within paradigms of violent colonial expansion.[19] Where analysis in the colonial period tended to see "Creole" languages as weakened mixtures of original archetypes, new social and linguistic research has reclaimed "Creoles" as vernacular languages and distinctive cultures in their own right.[20] According to this analysis, the early modern Atlantic world mixed institutions of appalling violence such as slavery with channels

[17] Ana Lucia Araujo, 'Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia: King Adandozan and the Atlantic Slave Trade', *Slavery and Abolition*, xxxiii, no. i (2012): 1–19; Mariana Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and its Hinterland* (Cambridge, 2013); Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross–Cultural Trade in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 2012); Green, *Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*; Shumway, *The Fante and the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*; Luis Nicolau Parés, *A Formação do Candomblé: História e Ritual da Nação Jeje na Bahia* (Campinas, 2007); Reis, *Domingos Sodré.*

[18] See esp. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London, 2008); Emmanuel Akyeampong, 'Africans in the Diaspora: The Diaspora in Africa', *African Affairs*, ic (2000), 183-215.

[19] On the meshing of autonomy and creolisation, see Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640* (Bloomington, 2003); on violence and creolisation see Candido *An African Slaving Port in the Atlantic World*, 12, 51-7, and Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*.

[20] See for instance the many essays in Robin Cohen and Paula Toninato (eds.), *The Creolisation Reader* (Abingdon, 2010); and John Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles* (Cambridge, 1983; 2 vols.).

through which Africans and peoples of African descent could also build networks and linkages which flowed into the formation of modernity. Creolisation as a concept thereby describes a two-way process of exchange and mixture in the formation of both language and culture, not one which saw the incorporation of "primitive" peoples by a powerful imperial hegemon in the creation of a weaker hybrid.

Linking these exchanges with more recent imperial experiences leads to a renewed engagement with the place of diasporas in imperial structures as a whole. As Michael Cahen and Eric Morier-Grenoud argue, even within hard imperial structures such as the 20th century Portuguese empire in Africa, some degree of "autonomous mobility" was possible for actors in this framework.[21] This article thus examines the spaces for autonomous mobility within the Atlantic imperial framework for Africans. The argument is that creolisation recognising the two-way process of creolisation allows an understanding of an autonomous creation of linkages by Africans. This in turn might help us to think beyond imperial structures in understanding the making of the Atlantic world. This is something that offers the potential to nuance our grasp of the complexities of interactions between West Africa and the Atlantic world, and thereby of the Atlantic as a unit of analysis.[22]

The evidence discussed here shows that representatives of imperial and non-imperial African political systems, free Blacks, and enslaved peoples conducted very similar types of exchange, and enabled very similar types of linkages, to those often assumed to have been the preserve of people acting within the aegis of Euro-Atlantic empires. Such exchanges have generally been framed from within their operation inside European imperial systems,

[21] Eric Morier-Grenoud and Michel Cahen, 'Introduction: Portugal Empire and Migrations', in *Imperial Migrations: Colonial Communities and Diaspora in the Portuguese World* (Houndsmills, 2012).

[22] Although some new work is beginning to place the slave trade within a context which also recognizes autonomous movement for West Africans – see Randy J. Sparks, *Where the Negroes are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, MA, 2013).

although it is important to recognise that recent work by scholars such as Eliga Gould, Christian Koot, and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva has stressed the interactions of and between empires as well as the role of national empires themselves.[23] Nevertheless, we see here that diplomatic initiatives by African polities, of the type associated with what we might call the "geopolitical Atlantic", were significant and began at a much earlier time than is usually acknowledged.[24] As Paul Lovejoy has noted, in spite of the brutal limitations imposed by the slave trade system, trans-oceanic bonds linking members of the African diaspora were forged more regularly than we might think.[25] This is not to say that we can or should dispose of empires in analysing the Atlantic, or that the idea of autonomous mobility can or should ever displace analysis of the horrors of forced migration, but rather that the place of African actors in forging linkages helps us to see how creolised empires worked alongside and grew with a range of structures shaped by peoples working far beyond their confines.

To make this argument this article analyses the earliest phase of Atlantic history, during the 16th and the first two thirds of the 17th centuries, drawing on archival research and a new turn in the study of Iberian sources for African history. In the past decade or so, a number of works have drawn on colonial documents produced by the Iberian empires in both

[23] Eliga H. Gould, 'Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery', *American Historical Review*, cxii, no. 3 (2007): 764-86; Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo–Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621–1713* (New York, 2011); Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa: Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic Aystem, 1580-1674* (Leiden, 2011).

[24] See for instance, Araujo, 'Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia'; Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade*.

[25] Paul E. Lovejoy, 'Ethnic Designations of the Slave Trade and the Reconsturction of the History of Trans–Atlantic Slavery', in Paul E. Lovejoy and David V. Trotman (eds.), *Trans–Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (London, 2003), 16.

Africa and the Americas.[26] Nevertheless, while these new works have begun to trace linkages between African societies and the Atlantic basin in more detail, they have tended to concentrate on the 18th and 19th centuries.[27] The new focus on the earlier period offered in this article stresses the deep historical roots of the connections drawn by African societies in a pan-Atlantic context, and the influence these connections had in actually shaping the parameters of subsequent exchanges.

One of the reasons that this argument has not been made before relates to the question of the evidence. The sources used here have been culled from a variety of archives in Europe and Latin America, which is an extremely time-consuming (and expensive) process. This is due to the fact that for this very early period of Atlantic history, there is no single archival base for West African histories; scholars have to triangulate material from many different archives and draw on it to develop a composite picture of interaction. One of the problems with constructing an Atlantic West African history that could sit alongside - but not within - an imperial paradigm is therefore precisely the way in which the relevant archives were constructed through imperial actions, and the difficulties of working around this without reproducing a proto-national imperial narrative of the Atlantic. The article attempts to do this by bringing together strands from many different archival repositories. Though this strategy may have the appearance of source selectivity to some readers, it actually reflects the archival realities. Although not definitive, when read together these multiple archival holdings do

[26] Barcia, *West African Warfare*; Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*; Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (Bloomington, 2010); Candido, *An African Slaving Port*; Ferreira, *Cross–Cultural Exchanges in the Atlantic World*; Green, *Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*; Walter Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity and an African Slave Trade, 1600–1830* (Cambridge, 2010); Jessica A. Krug, 'They 'Glorify in a Certain Independence': The Politics of Identity in Kisama, Angola, and its Diasporas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' (Univ. of Wisconsin, PhD thesis, 2012).

[27] The notable exception to this is the work of Herman Bennett.

offer ways into reading African interactions with Atlantic empires which go beyond the imperial lens. In addition to focussing on the earlier period of Atlantic history, this article offers a new perspective through its comparative approach. Since the Atlantic turn in Africanist historiography is still comparatively new, most studies have focussed on specific regions, with the importance of fieldwork for the construction of African histories also contributing to this specificity. This article, however, looks at Upper Guinea and then at West-Central Africa in turn. The comparative perspective builds to the core argument of the article, which is the need to analyse "imperial Atlantics" alongside other forms of connection at this time: by seeing how the role of Africans in constructing pan-Atlantic corridors was important in both regions, this core argument emerges more strongly than would be the case from a focus on either region alone.

In sum, by opening the question of the Atlantic to a thoroughgoing Atlantic African dimension, what emerges is the importance of a "pan-Atlantic" aspect to this analysis.[28] On the reading provided here, the pan-Atlantic borrows from the idea of pan-Africanism to posit an idea of the Atlantic which genuinely embraces the reciprocal actions and influences of the peoples and societies on all landmasses bounding that ocean. The article does not make the claim that there was an unchanging typology of relations along the whole Atlantic coast of Africa, since the structure of relationships varied from region to region according to different African inputs. Rather, what is emphasized is the multiplicity and diversity of these active exchanges in the foundational moment of forging the linkages of the Atlantic basin. .

[28] Green, *Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*, Part 2, for a sustained discussion of the pan–Atlantic. See also Jorge Cañizares Esguerra and James Sidwell, 'Mapping Ethnogenesis in the Early Modern Atlantic', *William and Mary Quarterly*, lxviii, no. ii, (2011): 181–208, who also stress the importance of the idea of the pan–Atlantic as a concept. The arrival of different scholars at the importance of the same conceptual idea at virtually the same time stresses its potential significance for current analysis.

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Stretching between the Senegal River and Sierra Leone, the region known to historians of Africa as Upper Guinea has a complex historiography.[29] A region of great human and linguistic diversity, recent research shows that it was the first region in Atlantic Africa to enter into intense trade with European mariners, and the first area in which a notable trans-Atlantic slave trade developed.[30] These engagements produced an intensive mobility that linked West Africa and the Americas as early as the 1520s.[31] Legal cases from this period in Hispaniola reveal strong connections linking communities in the Caribbean with those on the Cape Verde islands.[32] By the 1560s and 1570s, Caboverdean traders were travelling back and forth to the Americas, Seville and the Cape Verde islands, plying the routes of this first mass trans-Atlantic slave trade.[33]

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[29] See inter alia, George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society and Trade in Western Africa, 1000–1630* (Boulder, 1993); António Carreira, *Os Portuguêses nos Rios de Guiné, 1500–1900* (Lisbon, 1984); Philip J. Havik, *Silence and Soundbytes: The Gendered Dynamics of Trade and Brokerage in the Pre–Colonial Guinea Bissau Region* (Muenster 2004); Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves*; José da Silva Horta, *A 'Guiné do Cabo Verde': Produção Textual e Representações (1578–1684)* (Lisbon, 2011); Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast*; Avelino Teixiera da Mota, *Guiné Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1954; 2 vols.).

[30] Green, *Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*, 31–35, 192–99; António de Almeida Mendes, 'Esclavages et Traites Ibériques Entre Méditerranée et Atlantique (XVe – XVIIe Siècles): Une Histoire Globale' (Univ. of Paris, PhD thesis, 2007).

[31] Green, *Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*, Chapter 6; Toby Green, 'Building Slavery in the Atlantic World: Atlantic Connections and the Changing Institution of Slavery in Cabo Verde, 15th–16th Centuries,' *Slavery and Abolition* xxxii, no.ii (2011), 227–45.

[32] Archivo General de las Indias, Seville (hereafter AGI), Justicia 11, no. 4, fols. 8r, 9r, 10r.

[33] AGI, Escribanía, 1069A, No. 5.

Evidence from a variety of sources shows how this early rise of inter-continental mobility involved free African traders as well as the agency of enslaved Africans in shaping the structures of New World societies. Once this documentary, linguistic, and material evidence is considered, the role of Upper Guineans in shaping the cultural and material linkages in this earliest period of Atlantic history becomes clear. Through the shaping of Creole languages in the Caribbean, the development of food cultures, and the structures of trade and belonging, the role of Upper Guineans was crucial.

Although this initial trade was predicated on the enforced mobility of African labour in an Atlantic world suffering demographic crisis, very soon free Africans were among those on the move. Among the documentation related to a 1576 judicial case concerning a ship sailing from Bugendo, Guinea-Bissau, to Hispaniola, is a roster of all Africans on the ship; the vast majority were enslaved, but there were at least 11 who were not, including:

"a black (*negra*) called Luisa Rexa who said that she was free

her daughter, a young black (*negrita*) called Dominga who seemed to be around seven years old.

another black from the Jolof land [present-day Senegal] called Filipa who said that she was free

another black from the Papel land [present-day Guinea-Bissau] called Catalina who was breastfeeding two *mulato* infants and said that she was free

a black called Manuel who said that he was a free Creole

a black called Hernando from the Sape land [present-day Sierra Leone] who was bearded and said that he was free.

another bearded black called Amador lopez who said that he had been raised on the island of Santiago [Cape Verde] and that he was free

another called atanasio Cardoso who said that he was a free Creole

another black called franco lopez who came as a passenger and said that he was free."[34]

Thus on board ship were a number of free Africans of both genders and originating from among a variety of different peoples of Upper Guinea. They had come along with some *tangomãos*, people of Portuguese or Capeverdean origin who had married locally and raised families in Upper Guinea.[35] It is unclear whether these free Africans were coming as traders in their own right, or as spouses or companions of the *tangomãos*. Possibly, some of them may have been the *tangomãos'* business partners. What is clear, however, is that they had come freely, and that this formed part of a small but significant free African population which was used to travelling between Upper Guinea and the New World.

Other residents of Upper Guinea were also frequent travellers between Africa and the Americas. Alvaro Gonçalves Frances, a trader who lived in Upper Guinea from the early 1610s onwards, for over 20 years until his death, was cited by official documentation as

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[34] AGI, Escribanía 2A, fols. 499v–501v:

'*una negra que se llama Luisa Rexa que dijo ser horra.*

una negrita su hija al parecer de hedad de siete años que se llama dominga.

otra negra de tierra jalofa que dixo llamarse felipa y que dixo ser horra.

otra negra de tierra papel que se llama Catalina con dos criaturas mulatos a los pechos que dize ser horra.

un negro nombrado Manuel que dixo q era criollo y era horro.

un negro llamado hernando de tierra çape barbado que dixo hera horro.

otro negro barbado llamado Amador lopez que dixo hera criado en la ysla de Santiago y era horro.

otro llamado atanasio Cardoso que dixo era criollo y era horro.

otro negro llamado franco lopez que viene por pasajero que dixo hera horro'

[35] For a good discussion of *tangomãos*, see José Lingna Nafafé, *Colonial Encounters: Issues of Culture, Hybridity and Creolisation: Portuguese Mercantile Settlers in West Africa* (Frankfurt, 2007), 155–75.

being in Cartagena, in what is now Colombia, in 1630.[36] Gonçalves Frances married locally in Upper Guinea, and his Luso-African son, Jorge, was trained up by him in the Atlantic trade, and also most likely travelled freely to and from the Americas.[37] Together with the case of the ship sailing under Cristobal Cayado in the 1570s, this shows that voluntary mobility among African and Luso-African trading communities provided regular links with the Americas, probably from the 1540s through to the crisis in the Iberian empires of 1640.

What sort of impact did this mobility have on the formation of early New World societies? It is possible to link this evidence with a recent argument made by the historian David Wheat. Wheat has provided an important example of how this process may have influenced the formation of early societies in Hispanic America by looking at the customs of social incorporation of guests and strangers in Upper Guinea. Wheat argues that these were influential in the formation of early Spanish Caribbean society: there are frequent archival references to free African women and women of African descent as heads of households, and many of these women ran businesses such as taverns which were important sites for social

[36] AGI, Santa Fe 56B, expediente 73, no. 2. The earliest evidence of Alvaro Gonçalves Frances's presence in Upper Guinea is for 1613, in the account books of the slave trader Manuel Bautista Pérez – see Archivo General de la Nación, Lima (hereafter AGNL), Santo Oficio Contencioso (hereafter SO–CO), Ca. 19, doc. 197, fol. 443v.

[37] Jorge was born and raised in Cacheu (Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon (hereafter IAN/TT), Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 2079, fol. 267). As we saw above, his father Álvaro travelled to Cartagena, while his own son Dioguo Barraça Castanho travelled to and from Seville, probably by way of Cartagena (on his son, see Arquivo Historico Ultramarino, Lisbon (hereafter AHU), Conselho Ultramarino (hereafter CU), Guiné, Caixa 1, doc. 52, fol. 3v). Meanwhile, a Dioguo Gonçalves Frances, probably Jorge's brother, arrived from Cartagena in Cabo Verde in July 1651 (AHU, CU, Cabo Verde, Caixa 4, doc. 17). Such evidence makes it highly likely that Jorge also travelled across the Atlantic in this way.

exchange.[38] The evidence considered above suggests that these free women often travelled as autonomous traders to the Americas before establishing the businesses discussed by Wheat.

This sort of movement was easy to achieve. Documents show that ships sailed directly from Cartagena to Cape Verde and Upper Guinea for slaves, bringing with them letters and personal servants of agents on both sides of the Atlantic, both slave and free.[39] That Cartagena had especially close connections to Upper Guinea is shown by the volume of references to the region in letters and petitions signed in Cartagena, as compared to Angola: when there was a crisis in the supply of slaves to the city following the secession of Portugal from Spain in 1640, most people who offered to go to Africa to procure slaves offered to go to Upper Guinea.[40] This movement of information back and forth thus offers a prime example of the nature of the pan-Atlantic flows that arose linking Africa and the Americas during this early phase of Atlantic history, in which Africans and Luso-Africans crisscrossing the ocean shaped emerging social structures alongside imperial actions and policies. What this meant in practice was that institutions developed on one side of the Atlantic became influential in shaping their counterparts across the ocean, and that this connectedness was structured in part through the linkages made by these African and Luso-African traders.

The early period in which such a pan-Atlantic linkage emerged is significant. Historians of the South Atlantic such as Alencastro and Ferreira have done path-breaking work in nuancing our understanding of the traditional "triangular trade" linking Europe, Africa and the Americas, and showing that in the South Atlantic, and in Angola and Brazil in particular, connections were as much bilateral as triangular, linking the south with the

[38] David Wheat, '*Nharas* and *Morenas Horras*: A Luso-African Model for the Social History of the Spanish Caribbean, c. 1570-1640', *Journal of Early Modern History*, xiv, no. i (2010), 119-50.

[39] For a remarkable cache of private letters between traders in Cartagena and Cabo Verde, see AHU, CU, Cabo Verde, Caixa 3, no. 43.

[40] See the many documents to this end, particularly from 1647, in AGI, Indiferente General, 2796.

south.[41] These links were within the imperial prism, but they still can offer a different picture of Atlantic exchange. In the case of Upper Guinea from the late 16th through to the mid-17th century, we can see how relevant this perspective is: connections forging common Atlantic cultures were made as much directly between Africa and the Americas as they were in the triangular trade linking back to the European metropole. This material can show us the importance of recognizing the autonomous mobility of African actors alongside the violence of forced migration within the early Atlantic world: the free African traders discussed here did not only influence trading patterns in West Africa – as has long been argued – but made choices and conducted links which helped connect imperial and diasporic communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Inquisition trial in Cacheu in the 1660s of Crispina Peres, the wife of the Luso-African Jorge Gonçalves Frances, exemplifies this. The depositions show that domestic slavery was commonplace in the region in the mid-17th century, with many of the witnesses referring to personal slaves involved in various errands or activities related to the case.[42] However, such domestic slavery was not commonplace in the decentralized communities of Guinea-Bissau at this time, but must, rather, have been a practice adopted by Luso-Africans such as Jorge Gonçalves Frances who lived in African Atlantic trading posts, following their experiences in the New World.[43] Moreover, that a certain "pan-Atlantic" idea of the institution of slavery had developed is shown by the fact that judicial cases concerning

[41] Luis Filipe de Alencastro, *O Trato dos Viventes: Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul, Séculos XVI e XVII* (São Paulo, 2000); Ferreira, *Cross–Cultural Trade in the Atlantic World*.

[42] IAN/TT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 2079, fols. 6v, 7r, 14v, 27v, and many other places.

[43] Indeed one of Crispina Peres' slaves was said subsequently to have gone to the Spanish Indies ('*ás Indias de Castella'*), showing that such pan–Atlantic inter–connections were very real: ibid., fol. 32r.

enslavement in Veracruz from the 1630s accepted as valid letters of manumission (*alforría*) signed in Cacheu.[44]

Some readers may doubt how far these examples reveal the autonomous movement of Africans, since Luso-African communities such as those to which Jorge Gonçalves Frances belonged have traditionally been viewed as imperial outposts. Recent scholarship has challenged this view, however, with scholars such as Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta arguing that Luso-Africans developed a distinct identity in their own right.[45] Certainly, the formation of these Luso-African communities depended very much on the existing social structures of Upper Guinea for their incorporation into local trading communities.[46] Meanwhile, Mark's work on Luso-African architecture, and new evidence on the adoption of African ritual practices by Luso-Africans, certainly suggests that Luso-Africans were every bit as much an African as a "European" community.[47]

A useful example of this type of adoption of Upper Guinean rituals by the Luso-African community emerges from the aforementioned Inquisition trial of Crispina Peres. Many deponents claimed that among her fetishist practices was sacrificing the blood of a cow on the main deck of the ship and to the masthead in order to secure a safe and prosperous

[44] AGI, Escribanía 295A, num. 2, fols. 80r–v.

[45] Peter Mark, 'The Evolution of 'Portuguese' Identity: Luso–Africans on the Upper Guinea Coast from the Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century', *Journal of African History* xl, no. ii (1999), 173–91; José da Silva Horta, 'Evidence for a Luso–African Identity in 'Portuguese' Accounts on 'Guinea of Cape Verde' (Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries),' *History in Africa* xxvii (2000), 99–130. See also more recently, José da Silva Horta, *A 'Guiné do Cabo Verde': Produção Textual e Representações (1578–1684)* (Lisbon, 2011), 66–7.

[46] Green, *Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*.

[47] Peter Mark, *Portuguese Style and Luso–African Identity: Precolonial Senegambia, Sixteenth–Nineteenth Centuries* (Bloomington, 2002).

journey.[48] This custom seems to have been borrowed from the peoples of the nearby Bijagos islands, where Capuchin missionaries of the later 17th century noted that it was the custom, when any ship berthed in port, for the king to arrive and sacrifice the blood of a chicken on deck and especially around the masthead. Indeed, one of the Capuchins wrote, "this abomination is so frequent, that there is barely a single trader out of all those who go to these ports who does not permit it, since without it there would be no trade".[49] Thus there was a strong cultural incorporation of the Luso-African community within Upper Guinean societies, providing evidence of cross-cultural exchanges which influenced members of this community as they also moved (??) between Upper Guinea and the Americas.

Such evidence sheds light on the role of these actors in providing linkages between the Americas and Africa. Other valuable testimony of the ways in which they helped to construct an early shared pan-Atlantic space derives from inventories of goods seized from prisoners of the Inquisition in the New World in the 1630s. One example comes from the goods of a prisoner in jail in Cartagena in the 1630s, Blas de Paz Pinto: among the goods which the Inquisition requisitioned from him were "eight and a quarter *varas* of black cloth from Cabo Verde", and two "new blue bolts of cloth from Guinea" (ibid).[50] Requisitioning the goods of another prisoner, Francisco Piñero, the Inquisition itemized a quilt made of Capeverdean cotton.[51] Meanwhile, twenty years earlier, in Panamá, the trader Manuel

[48] IAN/TT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 2079, 13r, 22v, 48r

[49] Mateo de Anguiano, *Misiones Capuchinas en África* (Madrid, 1957), 134; '*esta abominación es tan frecuente, que apenas hay mercader de cuantos van a aquellos puertos que no lo admita, porque sino, no se compondría el trato*'.

[50] Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (hereafter AHN), Inquisición, Legajo 4822, Expediente 5, fols. 8v, 9v.

[51] AHN, Inquisición, Legajo 4822, Expediente 3, fol. 4r.

Enríquez Correa was accused of having illegally brought eighty pieces of cloth into the Americas from Sierra Leone.[52]

Along with these cloths, also in circulation in Cartagena were those known as *barafulas*, used as currency on the Upper Guinea Coast in the 17th century. New research by Linda Newson shows how a cloth currency – or *pano* – operated as the standard unit of exchange along the Upper Guinea coast throughout this period, and was used by Atlantic traders in African ports such as Cacheu as a means of keeping accounts of credit and debit.[53] What is significant here is that this system of accounting through cloth money was also used by these same trading networks in the Americas. In other words, there is strong evidence for the use of African currencies as means of exchange in the New World in this early period of Atlantic history; for as Philip Curtin showed, the use of cloth currencies in this part of West Africa considerably predated European trade, and the word *barafula* itself derived in Cape Verde from the cloths used by the Fulani of Senegambia known as *soro*.[54]

There are multiple examples of this importation of *panos* to the Americas. In August 1635, for example, the trader Juan Rodriguez Mesa, the Cartagena agent of a trader based in Cacheu, confirmed that he had received 250,120 Portuguese reis "proceeding from cloths and *barafulas* which he was given by Domingos de Vega in this city [of Cartagena]".[55] Traders such as Manuel Bautista Pérez routinely took *panos* and *barafulas* between Cacheu and

[52] AGI, Santa Fé 73, No. 3 – dated July 9th 1615.

[53] Linda A. Newson, 'The Slave Trading Accounts of Manoel Batista Peres, 1613–1619: Double–Entry Bookkeeping in Cloth Money', *Accounting History*, xviii, no. iii (2013), 343–65.

[54] Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1975), 212–3, 237.

[55] AHN, Inquisición, Legajo 1608, Expediente 27, fols. 31v–32r.

Cartagena from at least the 1610s onwards in order to settle debts.[56] Meanwhile Atlantic ship captains trading in Cacheu in this period accepted currency in the form of both *panos* and *barafulas* which were to be used to cancel debts to creditors in Cartagena once the ship had crossed the Atlantic. In 1616, for instance, Antonio Rodrigues da Costa accepted 483 white *panos* and 74 *barafulas*, to a total value of 278,167 reis, all to be paid down in the Indies to Duarte de Leão Marques or Jorge Fernandez Gramaxo.[57]

There is, then, strong evidence that cloths used as a form of currency went with the ships sailing between Upper Guinea and most of Spanish America during the formative period of Atlantic history. Who took them? At times, clearly, it was the crew and captains of the relevant ships, and the use and value of this cloth among Europeans in the New World is attested by their presence in probate inventories. However, since, as we have seen, free Africans were also travelling on these ships, and since cloth was of particular value to them as a currency – indeed since in the 17th century cloth was far and away the most valued item of exchange in West Africa – some of these bolts of cloth were taken and traded by African and Luso-African traders.[58] Certainly we know that the demand by Africans for particular cloths in colonial Latin America shaped material exchanges and trade between the two continents, for João Fernandes Vieira, one of the leaders of the Luso-Brazilian revolt against

[56] AGNL, SO–CO, Ca 19, doc. 197, fol. 535r: '*ha de aver por 341 pezos que vin devendo a Antonio por utros tantos panos branquos que lhe trouxe de gine 2728 Rs*'.

[57] Archivo General de la Nación, Santiago de Chile, Fondo Vicuña Mackenna, Vol. 77, Pieza 2, fol. 452r.

[58] On the predominance of cloth imports in the 17th century see for instance the inventory of goods seized from the English by the Dutch at Gorée island in 1664, where 71% of the value was constituted by a variety of cloths. See Nize Izabel de Morães, *À la Découverte de la Petite Côte au XVIIème Siècle (Sénégal et Gambie)* (Dakar, 1993–98), Vol. 3, 46–50. Such evidence is also found in Dutch trade at Elmina on the Gold Coast in the 1640s – see the appendices in Klaas Ratelband, *Vijf Dagregisters van Het Kasteel São Jorge da Mina (Elmina) aan de Goudkust 1645–1647* (`S–Gravenhage, 1953).

Dutch occupation of northern Brazil, sent some of the sugar produced in his sugarmills to Elmina to trade for the types of cloth that his soldiers from that region preferred.[59] Indeed, in colonial Brazil many payments were made in the form of cloth, which could even suggest that this African use of cloth as a currency had been taken by Africans with them to the New World, or at least borrowed by their colonial "masters" from African societies.[60]

Clearly, therefore, Upper Guineans provided many of the connective linkages which allowed new practices and structures to take root in the Americas, working both within creolised imperial spaces, as historians such as Herman Bennett have suggested, and alongside them. Finally, and in addition to the new archival evidence which a revisiting of the Iberian sources from Africa, the Americas, and Europe has offered, a consideration of recent research relating to material culture and sociolinguistic analysis reveals the extent of these linkages, and the cross-cultural exchanges which lay behind their formation.

The case of food is very telling. In recent years, historical geographers have illuminated the central role of Africans in shaping the food cultures of many parts of the Americas, bringing techniques of cultivation of foods as varied as okra, palm oil, rice, and sesame.[61] In the case of Upper Guinea, the discussion is often centred around the role of

[59] Diogo Lopes de Santiago, *Historia da Guerra de Pernambuco e Feitos Memoráveis do Mestre de Campo João Fernandes Vieira* (Recife, 1944), 472.

[60] Many taxes were routinely paid in cloth in the early 17th century in Bahía, according to a letter to the governor general which referred to taxed paid 'partly in clothes' (*pagos partes em roupa*) – see *Annaes do Museu Paulista* (São Paulo, 1922), Vol. 3, p. 59. On the use of cloth to make payments in Maranhão in the early 18th century, see Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil*, 147.

[61] See Judith Carney, 'With Grains in her Hair: Rice History and Memory in Colonial Brazil', *Slavery and Abolition*, xxv, no. i (2004), 1–27; Robert Voeks and John Rashford (eds.), *African Ethnobotany in the Americas* (New York, 2013); Case Watkins, '*Dendezeiro*: African Oil Palm Ecologies in Bahia, Brazil, and Implications for Development', *Journal of Latin American Geography*, x, no. i (2011), 9–33.

Upper Guineans in transferring rice production techniques to South Carolina.[62] However, for the early period there is significant evidence that the Upper Guinean role may have embraced more than rice. Inquisition evidence from the 17th century also refers to a "root" brought from Guinea to Cartagena to sweeten water, which suggests that food did accompany Africans in the transition to the New World.[63] This may well have been the kola nut, since as Carney and Rosomoff show kola nuts were found in Cartagena by the 1630s, used on slave ships to improve and freshen the taste of stagnant water.[64] While by the 19th century, the kola trade was well established between West Africa and Brazil, these pan-Atlantic linkages had been underway for at least two centuries by this time.[65]

Rounding off our understanding of the place of Upper Guineans in these early pan-Atlantic connections, we need to consider the place of language. Although colonial languages dominated in the New World, when we turn to the emergence of Creole languages, the role of Upper Guineans is also important. Research by Bart Jacobs and Nicolas Quint suggests that

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[62] Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001); Edda Fields–Black, *Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington, 2009). For a more recent debate on the question of the African role in American rice cultivation, see 'AHR Exchange: The Question of Black Rice', *American Historical Review*, cxv, no. i (2010), 123–71.

[63] AHN, Inquisición, Legajo 1647, Expediente 13, fol. 55v. Carney and Rosomoff's strong argument on the agency of Africans in cultivating African food crops in the New World would also offer strong grounds for thinking that such transplants were originally made by Africans from Upper Guinea – see Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 43–44.

[64] Ibid., 71.

[65] On the 19th–century kola trade, see Robert Voeks, *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé: African Magic, Medicine, and Religion in Brazil* (Austin, 1997), 27; James Sera and Robert Voeks, 'Berimbau de Barriga: Musical Ethnobotany of the Afro–Brazilian Diaspora', in Voeks/Rashford, *African Ethnobotany in the Americas*, 197.

the Creoles of Cabo Verde and the Caribbean island of Curação share a common origin.[66] According to Quint, the two languages have "too many points in common for this to be due to mere chance", with similarities including phonic, morphological, lexical, semantic and cultural aspects.[67]

How, then, did Caboverdean Kriolu evolve into the *Papiamentu* of Curação? Evidence suggests that this language became a vernacular initially in Cabo Verde, and was then taken from that region to Curaçao at some point after the 1630s.[68] As we have seen, there were deep trading connections between Upper Guinea and Cartagena in the early 17th century, and the island of Curação lies directly on the route to Cartagena from Cabo Verde. Since many of these trading voyages dealt in contraband slaves, one plausible explanation for the emergence of Papiamentu is that some of the earliest settlers were enslaved Upper Guineans who had been shipped as contraband slaves, and were then unloaded on Curação, where they began to develop Papiamentu from the language they knew from West Africa.[69] Indeed, the evidence that Curação was a destination for the contraband trade to Cartagena is

[66] Nicolas Quint, *Le Cap–Verdien: Origines et Devenir d'Une Langue Métisse* (Paris, 2000), 119–96; Bart Jacobs, 'The Upper Guinea Origins of Papiamentu: Linguistic and Historical Evidence', *Diachronica*, xxvi, no. iii (2009**)**, 19–79; Bart Jacobs, 'Upper Guinea Creole: Evidence in Favor of a Santiago Birth', *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, xxv, no. ii (2010), 289–343.

[67] Quint, *Le Cap–Verdien*, 166.

[68] Tobias Green, 'Masters of Difference: Creolisation and the Jewish Presence in Cabo Verde, 1497–1672' (Univ. of Birmingham, PhD thesis, 2007), 336.

[69] There are continual complaints of contraband to Cartagena in the Spanish documentation. See in particular AGI, Santa Fe 56B, Expedientes 29, 40, 52; AGI, Escribanía 591A, *Comisión de Investigación en Fraudes de los Navios*, Cartagena, 1641; AGI, Escribanía 632A, Piezas 1 and 2; for the inquisitorial evidence see AHN, Inquisición, Legajo 4816, Expediente 22 instance. For the relationship to Papiamentu, see also Quint, *Le Cap–Verdien*, 194.

extensive, and by the 1660s residents of Cartagena were openly accused of sending boats to Curação to purchase contraband slaves.[70]

Upper Guineans therefore were major actors in forging Atlantic linkages. How, though, does this material help us to think about the ways in which Atlantic empires worked alongside other structures in forging the linkages of the Atlantic world? It is clear that the Iberian empires did circumscribe much of this movement, and that as we have seen from the evidence on plants and the Creole language moving from Upper Guinea to the Americas, this was directly connected to forced migration of enslaved Africans. In other words, creolisation was predicated on institutional violence rather than autonomy. At the same time, we have also seen that, alongside this, free Africans and Luso-Africans moved between West Africa and the Americas, and helped to forge some of the other linkages addressed here. A strict imperial framework does not therefore capture the whole of the process of forging these linkages. Working in and alongside Iberian structures, the autonomous movement of some Upper Guineans helped in the construction of the links of the early Atlantic; and they did so together with both Iberian actors themselves and those enslaved Africans who were also able to construct linkages and shape many aspects of material culture and language in the New World.

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The second region examined here, West-Central Africa, is one of the best known regions of Atlantic Africa in the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.[71] The current estimate of the

[70] AGI, Indiferente General 2834, letter dated January 14th 1664.

[71] See for instance Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison, 1988); Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles and the*

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database www.slavevoyages.org (hereafter TSTD2), that roughly 45.5% of enslaved Africans sold into the Atlantic trade came from this region, is indicative of its importance in the early modern interconnections of Africa, the Americas and Europe.[72]

Several scholars have highlighted problems with a quantitative methodology for the study of Atlantic slavery.[73] Given this debate, and the fact that the core argument of this article is that forced migration of Africans within imperial structures needs to be considered alongside the reality of autonomous movement in the construction of early Atlantic linkages, the argument pursued here does not propose a quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, estimated volumes of traffic can be helpful in developing a picture of the intensity of pan-Atlantic exchanges, and of the roles which West-Central Africans had in developing these. For the period between 1600 and 1640, the estimates of the TSTD2 suggest that an annual average of approximately 12500 enslaved Africans departed Angola annually for the Americas.[74] Scholars of the period have frequently suggested that the evidence supports this kind of

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Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660 (Cambridge, 2007); Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison, 1966).

[72] Data accessed September 26th 2013.

[73] Green, *Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*, 7–9; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, 'Africa and Africans in the African Diaspora: The Uses of Relational Databases', *American Historical Review*, cxv, no. i, (2010), 136–50.

[74] Data accessed September 26th 2013.

figure.[75] The Angolan historian Adriano Parreira, however, has suggested higher figures of around 16000 enslaved Africans departing Luanda annually in this period.[76]

Archival data from Iberian archives supports the higher figure suggested by Parreira. By 1638, ships sought to procure 700-800 enslaved Africans before leaving Luanda.[77] Those ships for which we have precise records suggest that the median range was about 400-500 enslaved Africans on each ship.[78] Numerous sources suggest that there were between 30-40 ships each year calling for enslaved Africans at Luanda in the 1630s, which would place the annual exports at 16000.[79] These estimates are likely to be more accurate than the official

[75] Beatrix Heintze, *Fontes para a História de Angola do Século XVII, Vol.* I (Stuttgart, 1985), 7, provides an estimate of an annual export of 12–13000 enslaved Africans per year for the period of the 1620s. For the period from 1580–1630, Joseph C. Miller estimates 8–10000 departures from Luanda (Miller, 'Central Africa During the Era of the Slave Trade, c. 1490s–1850s', in Linda M. Heywood (ed.), *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (Cambridge, 2002), 26–7).

[76] See Adriano Parreira, *Economia e Sociedade em Angola na Época da Rainha Jinga (Século* XVII) (Lisbon, 1990), 26. The estimate of 15000 enslaved Africans exported annually from Luanda was given by several contemporary accounts – see for instance, *A Little True Forraine Newes: Better Than a Great Deale of Domestick spurious false Newes, published daily without fear or wit, to the shame of the Nation, and beyond the liberty of* Paris Pasquils (London, 1641), 4, 10, 11.

[77] AHU, CU, Angola, Caixa 3, doc. 44, March 16th 1638.

[78] AGI, Escribanía 291B, Pieza 3 – 1636, with 482 enslaved Africans; AGI, Santa Fé 73, no. 91 – 1622, with 462 enslaved Africans. Dutch sources can place numbers higher. One Dutch eyewitness in Pernambuco in 1627 saw 600 Africans on one ship (see S.P. L;Honoré Naber (ed.), *Het iaerlyck verhael van Joannes de Laet 1624–1636* ('S–Gravenhage, 1931), Vol 2, 31); also writing in the 1620s, Ruiters said that he had seen a ship with his own eyes carry 500 slaves from Luanda to Bahia, and that a ship of 70–80 lasts carried 600 slaves – see S.P. L;Honoré Naber (ed.), *Toortse der Zee–Vaart door Dierick Ruiters 1623...* ('S–Gravenhage. 1913), 13.

[79] Indeed some sources suggest more, with one Dutch account of 1641 saying 60–80 ships per year called at Luanda (Nationaalarchief, Den Haag (hereafter NA), Oude West Indische Compagnie (hereafter OWIC),

documentation, since vast numbers of denunciations show that mass fraud was routine, and even though the TSTD2 includes provision for contraband its estimates for this tend to be minimalist. Meanwhile a series of judicial cases from Angola in the 1630s suggests the undercounting of 150 enslaved Africans compared to the declaration of ship captains on leaving Angola.[80] When the volume and range of this evidence is considered, Adriano Parreira's estimate of 16000 enslaved Africans departing Angola annually in the first third of the 17th century seems (if anything) on the conservative side.

Although such data is framed from within the violence of imperial institutions, it is important in illuminating how this trade may have affected culture and society in West-Central Africa in this period. However, while the significance of this trade is generally appreciated by scholars, until recently the interconnections between this region and the Americas, and the ways in which West-Central Africans moved back and forth between the two continents, was less well-known. This has changed with the recent books of Mariana Candido and Roquinaldo Ferreira, both of which reveal the extent of these interconnections and form a persuasive argument for what Ferreira calls a unitary South Atlantic world.[81]

The importance of the comparative analysis that follows here is that it underscores the early date at which these interconnections developed, and their centrality in the formation of early Atlantic linkages, systems and ideas. This matters because analysis of the formation of the Atlantic world has traditionally tended to focus on the rise of the Spanish empire and the early 17th century conflicts between Iberian and Dutch actors. Recent works focussing on

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Inventarisnummer 57, no. 270). This is probably an overestimate, however, since Portuguese sources point to a lower figure: see Biblioteca da Ájuda, (hereafter BA), Lisbon, Códice 51–IX–25, fol. 99r (from c. 1620).

[80] AGI, Escribanía 591A, Piezas 1 and 2.

[81] Ferrreira, *Cross–Cultural Trade in the Atlantic World*; Candido, *An African Slaving Port in the Atlantic World*.

the Dutch in the 17th century do offer important new directions, even though the imperial focus remains predominant.[82] Yet what existed here was a pan-Atlantic cultural and political space, which was recognised as such by actors on the ground. Indeed, in 1631, a Portuguese colonial official described Luanda in Angola as the "*fronteira*" (bordering region) of Pernambuco, in north-eastern Brazil, which illustrates how long-standing a connection this was.[83]As in the case of Upper Guinea, the links between Angola and Brazil were founded on the slave trade and imperial structures, though quickly moving beyond this. An illustration of the prominence of imperial structures comes from the connections between the military tactics employed in Brazil and those used in Angola. The *farinha de guerra* (literally: war flour – manioc flour used for sustenance of armies) employed by the Portuguese army and their allies in Angola was borrowed directly from the practices of the Tupinambá of coastal Brazil; writing in the 1580s, Gabriel de Souza tells us that the Tupinambá had long used this *farinha* in their military campaigns.[84] However, the use of Brazilian provisions rapidly diversified beyond assistance in military operations, and manioc from the New World became a mainstay of the diet of Atlantic Angola, and remained so until the 19th century.[85]

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[82] See for instance C.A.P. Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern Period: The Economic Relationship Between Amsterdam and Lisbon, 1640–1705* (Amsterdam, 2004); Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*; Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade*; Silva, *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa*; Michiel Van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages, 1590–1634* (Leiden, 2008).

[83] See António Brásio (ed.), *Monumenta Misionária Africana*, 15 vols. (Lisbon, 1953–1988; hereafter MMA), Vol. 8, 93.

[84] Gabriel Soares de Souza, *Notícias do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1851), 167–8; see also Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (Berkeley, 1990; translated by Janet Whatley), 115.

[85] For excellent and pathfinding discussions of the importance of Brazilian food cultivation for Angolan history, see Luis Filipe de Alencastro, *O Trato dos Viventes*. I am grateful to Roquinaldo Ferreira for clarifying the longevity of these connections for me.

Owing to the aridity and insecurity of Portuguese Angola, much of the *farinha* for Angola was grown in the states of Bahía and Espírito Santo in Brazil, and the Angolan colony depended on Brazil for its provisions. This practice dated since at least the late 1580s, when the orders for the new governor general of Brazil stated that the best way for him to procure galley-slaves from Angola would be to send a ship laden with "provisions for the land of Angola".[86] This interconnection probably dated right back to the first Portuguese wars in Angola, following the foundation of Luanda by Paulo Dias de Novais in 1575, while the early contraband slave trade linking Luanda to Buenos Aires was also related to the export of provisions – especially wheat - from the provinces of the Rio de la Plata to West-Central Africa.[87]

Thus this connection through material culture and food consumption dates back to the origins of South Atlantic cultures. Attempts were made by the governor Fernão de Sousa in the 1620s to remove this dependency by promoting agriculture in Angola.[88] The situation was considered especially serious as there had been a real danger of famine in Luanda when the Dutch seizure of the port of Salvador in 1624 threatened shipments of manioc from Brazil.[89] However these attempts floundered, and the extent of the ongoing relationship of provisioning was emphasised in 1643, when the colonizers of Alagoas, north of Bahía, were

[86] *Documetos para a História do Açúcar*, 3 vols.,(Rio de Janeiro, 1954), Vol. 1, 359.

[87] Carlos Sempat Assadourian, *El tráfico de esclavos en Córdoba, 1588–1610: Según las actas de protócolos del Archivo Histórico de Córdoba* (Córdoba, 1965), 22; Assadourian, *El tráfico de esclavos en Córdoba de Angola a Potosí: siglos XVI–XVII* (Córdoba, 1966), 18.

[88] António de Oliveira de Cadornega, *História geral das guerras Angolanas*, 3 vols. (1680: repr. ed. Lisbon, 1970), Vol. 1, 124–25. For an extraordinarily complete discussion of Sousa and source compilation of his tenure as governor, see Beatriz Heintze (ed.), *Fontes para a história de Angola*.

[89] Klaas Ratelband, *Os Holandeses no Brasil e na costa Africana: Angola, Kongo e São Tomé (1600–1650)* (Lisbon, 2003), 86.

urged to grow more manioc because of the shortage of provisions in Angola.[90] Hence a comparison between West-Central Africa and Upper Guinea reveals the importance of developing pan-Atlantic food cultures, and also how these initially were grounded in Portuguese imperial expansion.

An aspect where the case of West-Central Africa was different to that of Upper Guinea in the Atlantic world was in the sphere of military tactics, where horses bred in Brazil were central in military campaigns in Angola. By the end of the 17th century, preferential lading rights were given to every ship leaving Salvador in Bahía for Angola with horses.[91] Indeed, military interconnections stretched beyond cavalry already at this time. During the wars fought by the Luso-Brazilians to recapture Luanda from the Dutch in the 1640s, their porters included Africans from Kassanje who had been deported to Bahía, but had returned with the Brazilian army to Angola; these Luso-Brazilian armies were pivotal in the defeat of the Ndongo kingdom in 1671 and the subsequent intensification of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.[92]

These military connections are very important, as they show that the links in the South Atlantic were at the level of state and diplomacy. Where the analysis departs from the considerations of imperial geopolitics, however, is that these diplomatic links cut right to the heart of West-Central African political systems. At the diplomatic level, the famous paintings of ambassadors from the King of Kongo at the court of the Duke of Nassau by Albert Eckhout from Dutch-controlled Brazil of the 1630s, , have illustrated some of these

[90] José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello, *Fontes para a história do Brasil Holandês* (Recife, 2004), Vol. 2, 113.

[91] Arquivo Público da Bahía, Salvador (hereafter APB), Colónia, Maço 5, no. 132 – September 16th 1699. See also Roquinaldo Ferreira, 'The Supply and Deployment of Horses in Angolan Warfare (17th and 18th Centuries)', in Beatrix Heintze and Achim Van Oppen (eds.), *Angola on the Move: Transport Routes, Communications and History* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), 41–51.

[92] AHU, CU, Angola, Caixa 4, doc. 73 – c. 1646.

connections. But there were also diplomatic initiatives from the Count of Sonho, on the Atlantic coast, who sent his own emissaries to Dutch Brazil in the 1640s, having previously written to the United Provinces in the 1620s urging for Dutch support against the Portuguese.[93] This, combined with John Thornton and Andrea Mosterman's important discovery of diplomatic correspondence relating to this diplomacy, illustrates the way in which West-Central African diplomatic engagement with the Atlantic world was every bit as much "political", or geopolitical, as those of the Euro-Atlantic empires.[94] Such diplomatic initiatives were not limited to this region, since the king of Arda also sent an embassy to the Spanish court at Madrid in 1658, and indeed as Ana Lucia Aruajo has shown, diplomatic connections between Dahomey and Bahia were important in the 18th century.[95]

Moreover, the diplomatic engagements of West-Central Africa in the Atlantic world were already long-standing by the 17th century. The presence of ambassadors from the Kingdom of Kongo in Portugal in the 16th century is well documented: by the 1550s; however, such a diplomatic presence extended further in the region to ambassadors sent from the kingdom of Ndongo to the Portuguese court.[96] And when, in 1580, a faction of the Portuguese court resisted the imposition of the joint monarchy with Spain, and sided with the

[93] K. Ratelband (ed.), *De Westafrikaanse reis van Piet Heyn 1624–1625* (`S–Gravenhage, 1959), 7–9, 24. Indeed, Mark Meuwese puts the beginnings of these diplomatic initiatives to as early as the first decade of the 17th century – see Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade*, 83–5.

[94] John Thornton and Andrea Mosterman, 'A Re–Interpretation of the Kongo–Portuguese War of 1622 According to New Documentary Evidence', *Journal of African History*, li, no. ii (2010), 235–48.

[95] Mateo de Anguiano, *Misiones Capuchinas en Africa* (Madrid, 1957), Vol. 2, 52; Arauajo, 'Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia'.

[96] Brásio, MMA, Vol. 2, 409.

pretender Dom Antonio, the Kongolese ambassador participated in this group and was subsequently exiled for many years to Mazagão in Morocco.[97]

Such examples add a great deal to the military links between Brazil and Angola discussed earlier. They make clear that in the case of West-Central Africa, "political Atlantic engagement" involved geopolitical actions from all sides, as well as the passage of ideas and customs back and forth across the Atlantic. There is a rich diplomatic correspondence linking West-Central African kingdoms to the United Provinces, the Vatican and Brazil in the 17th century, which makes it plain just how routine these connections were.[98] When it comes therefore to the formation of what we might call "the geopolitical Atlantic", the place of states from West-Central Africa in this early process certainly needs to be considered alongside that of European empires, and the role of ambassadors from Kongo in the circulation of these ideas underscores the fact that the engagement of West-Central Africa in the Atlantic ran far beyond the slave trade.

Moreover, asthe examples from Upper Guinea discussed above show, beyond the diplomatic and military interlinkages, autonomous mobility from the early 17th century by free Africans shared in constructing this pan-Atlantic cultural and economic space. Just how commonplace these linkages became in this region is illustrated by a story from António de Cavazzi. In his influential history of West-Central Africa, Cavazzi claimed that the custom of excising two teeth from the upper gum, practised by the Imbangala, had been introduced through experience of the Inca army in Peru, led by Tupuco-incay-Timpanqui. Many of those in Peru, according to Cavazzi, also took to excising teeth from the lower gum, and then, "with the practice of traders taking slaves to the Spanish mines in America, many of the very same

[97] Ibid., Vol. 5, 7.

[98] See e.g. ibid., Vol. 8, 584–87; Vol. 9, 14–15, 64; Vol. 11, 138–40, 286.

Blacks, after a certain time, returned to Africa, and transported the custom to their own countrymen".[99]

Of course, the accuracy of Cavazzi's explanation of this Imbangala practice must be open to question, for it tends to suggest a certain cultural diffusionist view which was to become commonplace among later colonial powers in Africa. However, whether accurate or not, what it suggests is that by the 1660s there was a significant process of return of free Africans from the Americas to West-Central Africa. Had such a movement not been commonplace, Cavazzi would not have thought this a reasonable explanation to include in his book. Thus, as in Upper Guinea, the suggestion emerges that Africans who travelled back and forth across the Atlantic had by this time created a space for some autonomous movement, in which ritual, cultural and political influences had become pan-Atlantic.

Moreover, not only did this mobility of Africans encompass the return of free Africans to Angola, but there was also the passage of enslaved Africans not only from Africa to Brazil, but also from Brazil to Africa. Royal decrees issued in Salvador, Bahía, in the 1690s, make frequent reference to the exiling of "delinquent slaves [*escravos delinquentes*]" to Angola and São Tomé. A decree of May 24th 1690 suggested it might be better to retain these slaves in Bahía for service on the galleys;[100] yet two years later the flight of a slave who had escaped "from the ship in which he was travelling, in exile, to Angola" was noted.[101] Once in Africa, the presence of those who had spent years in the New World inevitably added

[99] Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione de' tre' Regni Comngo, Matamba, et Angola situati nelli'Etiopia Inferiore Occidentale e delle missioni Apostoliche esercitatevi da Religiosi Capuccini* (Bologna, 1687), 179: '*con ocasione de mercantarsi le condotte di Schiavi per le Miniere de Castigliani in America, gl'istessi Neri, de' quail molti doppo il tempo presisso, ritornano in Affrica, lo transportarono à proprii paesani*'.

[100] APB, Colonia, Maço 1, doc. 78.

[101] APB, Colonia, Maço 2, doc. 93.

to the nature of the pan-Atlantic links being forged by Africans in both Africa and the New World. Thus as in Upper Guinea, the construction of linkages worked both inside and outside the forced migrations shaped by the slave trade.

What emerges from these considerations of the earliest period of the Atlantic corridor linking Angola and Brazil, founded on military and diplomatic alliances as well as on the slave trade, is that the unitary South Atlantic culture posited by Ferreira can be extended all the way back to the 16th century, to the transfer of manioc flour and the first diplomatic and cultural exchanges. Indeed, it may well be precisely because of the longevity of the interconnections between these regions, peoples and cultures that cross-cultural connections had become so intensive by the middle of the 18th century. What had come about was a shared cultural and material space, a space which West-Central Africans had played a vital role in creating through their mobility as slaves, free traders, and diplomats, from the late 16th century onwards.

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This article has demonstrated the importance of Upper Guineans and West-Central Africans in creating pan-Atlantic corridors linking Africa and the Americas in the formative moment of Atlantic history. For some scholars, this might be seen as nothing new in the scheme of Atlantic studies. Studies of the 18th and early 19th centuries have illustrated such connections not only in West-Central Africa, as we have seen, but also in the important nexus linking Yoruba-speaking peoples of the Bight of Benin with North-eastern Brazil. Here Africans returned to Benin from mid-18th century onwards, often as agents of trade, and soon created

important links in terms of food, religion, and trans-Atlantic connections.[102] As Luis Nicolau Pares and Lisa Earl Castillo have shown with their current research, such ritual practice then returned to Benin through the migration of free Blacks (known as *libertos*) to ports such as Agué and Ouidah in the 1830s and 1840s.[103]

However, the argument of this article relates not only to the pan-Atlantic links shown in such studies, but also to how these links were created. As this article has shown, Africans not only made use of these links but made them themselves, working both in and alongside imperial structures, and through their forced and autonomous migrations back and forth across the Atlantic. In the two regional case studies we have compared, these contacts were predicated initially on the Atlantic slave trade, but very swiftly they came to involve much more than the condition of enslavement, or the business dimension of the trade in slaves. Yet, as was illustrated at the beginning of this article, while there has been much work on the African diaspora, and while Thornton's work does an excellent job of demonstrating the agency of Africans in different Atlantic spaces, the role of Africans in actually constructing

[102] Pierre Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des Nègres entre le Golfe de Bénin et Bahía de Todos os Santos du dix–septième au dix–neuvième siècle* (Paris, 1968) ; see also Robin Law and Kristin Mann, 'West Africa in the Atlantic Community'.

[103] Luis Nicolau Pares and Lisa Earl Castillo, papers presented at the conference *Bahia, África e o Mundo Atlântico, Séculos XVII–XIX*, Universidade Federal da Bahía, Salvador, March 20th 2012. There is an extensive literature on this 19th century diaspora: see especially, Lisa Earl Castillo and Luis Nicolau Pares, 'Marcelina da Silva: A Nineteenth Century Candomblé Priestess in Bahía', *Slavery and Abolition*, xxxi, no. i, (2010), 1–27; Lisa Lindsay, ''To return to the bosom of their Fatherlands': Brazilian Immigrants in Nineteenth–Century Lagos', *Slavery and Abolition*, xiv, no. i, (1994), 22–50; J. Lorand Matory, 'The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xli, no. i (1999), 72–103.

these global linkages needs to be given a greater emphasis in the literature on the early modern Atlantic empires.

This lacuna may derive from the origins of the discipline of Atlantic history, lying as they do in the interstices of the rise of NATO and a search for a common culture bridging modern imperial Atlantic alliances. Yet the absence of Africa from this picture may no longer suit the new paradigm, which has superseded the post-war global order during which NATO and Atlantic studies were constructed. In this multi-polar world, in which Chinese engagement in Africa has broken the initial post-colonial connection of the old colony-metropole axis, the exclusion of non-imperial, African actors from the analysis of the linkages that forged the early modern Atlantic seems anachronistic.[104] Moreover, as has been discussed, new perspectives on diasporas reveal the extent to which autonomy was possible to a limited degree even in the most coercive of imperial regimes, such as those of the creolised empires of the early modern Atlantic world, as well as the Portuguese empire in 20th-century Africa.

To supplement this conclusion, we should dwell not only on the pan-Atlantic aspect of African historical connections in the early phase of Atlantic history, but also on the intra-African connections which developed at the same time. There were indeed longstanding connections between the various regions of Atlantic Africa, connections that date right back to the inception of Atlantic ocean trading. In the early 16th century, São Tomé island's sheep and oxen were imported from the Cape Verde islands, offshore from Upper Guinea.[105] Throughout the 16th century, ships travelling between Kongo and Portugal routinely stopped to provision at these islands.[106] By the 1520s, ships travelling from Kongo always called in

[104] See for instance Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (Oxford, 2009).

[105] MMA, Vol. 4, 35–36.

[106] Ibid., Vol. 3, 187.

on the Senegambian coast to collect provisions of millet and rice before continuing on to Portugal.[107] Very quickly, linkages were formed on the ground by the peoples of Angola and Upper Guinea. In 1526 the *manikongo*, Afonso I, wrote a letter to King João III of Portugal complaining of the activities of *grumetes* from the Guinea-Bissau region in the Kongolese port of Mpinda, and also mentioned traders from Benin there.[108] So regularized were the connections between these two parts of Atlantic Africa, and so conscious were people in each of the histories of the other, that when the Imbangala warriors began to devastate areas of West-Central Africa in the late 16th century, they were thought by many to have originated among the Mane warriors who had devastated Sierra Leone in the 1550s.[109]

Such maritime connections also had mercantile implications, and cloths from Arda and Benin were in high demand in the Angola and Kongo regions by the 1640s.[110] On the evidence we have just seen, the presence of people from Benin in Kongo in the 1520s may well have been connected to this demand and to the development of this intra-African trade. Meanwhile, further north on the Atlantic African coast in Upper Guinea, cloths woven along the Gambian river and in the kingdom of Cayor, just south of present-day Dakar, were traded as far away as the Gold Coast.[111] Finally, on the Gold Coast itself, by the early 1600s Africans living near Elmina were sending ships with their own provisions to São Tomé and Luanda.[112]

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[107] Ibid., Vol. 4, 76.

[108] Ibid., Vol. 1, 479.

[109] For more details see Green, *Rise of the Trans–Atlantic Slave Trade*, 272.

[110] Louis Jadin, *L'Ancien Congo et l'Angola 1639–1655, d'après les Archives Romaines, Portugaises, Néerlandaises et Espagnols* (Brussels and Rome, 1975; 3 vols.), Vol. 1, 122, 219.

[111] Sieur Villault, *Relation des costes d'Afrique, appellées Guinée* (Paris, 1669), 59; Olfert Dapper, *Description de l'Afrique* (Amsterdam, 1686), 240.

[112] Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, Vol. 6, 272.

When we look at the strong evidence of this intra-African commerce connected to Upper Guinea and West-Central Africa, conducted by both African and European carriers, we can see that many Africans were aware of these distinctive regions and kingdoms and of their manufactures. Certainly, it is hard to believe that the weavers of Arda and Benin would not have known the markets for their cloths, given the connections between the two regions that we have just seen for the 16th century. The more mercantile peoples knew of the trading possibilities of different parts of the coast, and this shows them as agents in the creation of the Atlantic African region as at least in part a commercial and political unit.

These final considerations on the intra-African linkages are significant. Clearly, as with the cases we have looked at for the Americas, autonomous movement was an important part of how these linkages were constructed. Taken with the rest of the evidence examined here, this shows us that Africans not only played key roles in the construction of linkages between Atlantic cultures and commercial units, but also in the meshing of intra-African commerce and markets in this formative period of Atlantic history. Revelatory as these African linkages are, their importance reaches beyond our understanding of Africa's histories in the face of the violence of the slave trade in the Atlantic world. Introducing a thoroughgoing African element into analyses of the linkages of the Atlantic space forces us to rethink the processes by which the different spaces were inter-connected. If global history is now a question of understanding the emergence of linkages, we see that Africans made some of those linkages. These reflections encourage us to think beyond the constraints of imperial history, and to grasp how individuals and communities themselves wielded important actions that cut against the grain – and, often, the text – of the administrative theory of the early Atlantic world as seen from Amsterdam, Lisbon, London, Madrid or Paris. Thus, understanding how pan-Atlantic spaces were formed in the 16th and 17th centuries helps to move beyond an imperial Atlantic. The African element in constructing early global linkages

was not limited to the diaspora in the New World, but was inseparable from the political, cultural and economic histories of African societies. Thus not only does a genuine pan-Atlantic require Africa to be part of it, but it is in fact by understanding the nature of the linkages wrought by African peoples and societies in this period that the composite and complex nature of the Atlantic world emerges.

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